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[Five Things You Didn't Know About Compassion Fatigue](#)

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Individual response to compassion fatigue can vary from person to person.

By U.S. Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery Public Affairs

1. Do you know what compassion fatigue is? Here's a hint: it doesn't mean you're tired of being compassionate. Compassion fatigue is a chronic, long-term exhaustion and traumatic stress injury associated with reliving the suffering of the person you are caring for. And it's not just something that affects medical professionals – anyone who spends time regularly caring for another can develop it.

2. Why do I need to know about compassion fatigue? With advances in military medicine and a high battlefield survival rate, the number of patients with traumatic injuries, physical and psychological, has increased. An increase in patient load – especially of critically injured patients – puts caregivers at risk for developing compassion fatigue. Creating awareness of this type of stress injury means we can work together to identify caregivers who are stressed and make sure they get help.

3. Is anyone more likely to develop compassion fatigue? Everyone is affected by stress differently and can tolerate different amounts of it, but there are four factors that seem to contribute to compassion fatigue among caregivers:

- Poor self-care skills
- Previous unresolved psychological trauma
- Inability or refusal to control work stressors
- Lack of satisfaction with work

4. How can you tell if you, or someone you know, suffers from compassion fatigue? Individual response to compassion fatigue can vary from person to person, but common symptoms include:

- Hopelessness
- Problems sleeping/ nightmares
- Constant stress and anxiety
- Poor concentration
- Intrusive thoughts

5. How do you manage compassion fatigue?

- Step 1: Self-care. Regular exercise, proper nutrition, social connections and enjoyable activities all play a role in helping caregivers manage stress and build resilience.
- Step 2: Know when to reach out for help. When self-care isn't working, the best thing you can do for yourself and those you are caring for is to get help. If you don't take care of your own health and well-being, you won't be able to take care of anyone else.

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